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THE INDIA CULTURES QUARTERLY

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VOL. 17 SECOND QUARTER 1959 NO. 2

NOTICE

Foreign (outside India) readers are invited to become permanent subscribers to THE INDIA CULTURES QUARTERLY, which aims to record factual information of use to students interested in the cultures of India. Please note the low annual fee which has been adjusted to the cost price of printing and mailing, on a non-profit basis.

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Readers in India are advised that the subscription fee is Rs 2 for salaries of Rs 200 or less, and Rs 4 for salaries of Rs 201 or more. Note that henceforth Dr R. D. Immanuel will be in charge of editorial matters (as in the past), and Dr H. H. Presler will be responsible for the Mid-India feature and assisting with the business details.

VIGILANT SERVANTS OF GOD

By PATTANATHU PILLAIAR

[Pattanathu Pillaiar was a Tamil Mystic of about the 10th century A.D. Pillai is the name of a non-brahmin caste. This beautiful translation is taken from a book titled *Dedication,* by Arya Vogelle which is now out of print. We regret we do not know the name of the publisher, but we do hope they or some one else will bring out a second edition of the valuable poems of this great poet].

Vigilant Servants of God

1

Those who wish to be established in God, and to be of some little service to His children, ever toil with persistent perseverance.
They are ever vigilant and watchful.
They achieve great things for the good of humanity.
God crowns them with success.

2

Those who wish to be the perpetual servants of God and humanity keep the garden of their heart ever fresh and beautiful.
The plot of ground which they piously care for, and which they prepare for the good seed of Devotion to God and humanity, is the fertile plot of Love.
The Water with which they nourish the good seedlings of Devotion to God and humanity is Truth and Sincerity of heart.
The rich food with which they nourish the tender plant of Devotion to God and humanity is constant Care and willing Service.
They are ever vigilant and watchful.
They achieve great things for the good of humanity.
God crowns their ungrudging Service with success.

3

Those who wish to be the perpetual servants of God and humanity are ever anxious for the good plant of their Devotion to God and His children, in the beautiful garden of their heart.
They never allow the cunning robbers of the five sense to enter into the garden of their heart and sow evil seeds of vanity and vain glory.
They never allow the six wicked weeds of lust, anger, covetousness, desire, pride and jealousy to thrive in the garden of their heart, and to choke the good plant of their Devotion to God and humanity.
They never let the giant tree of Self overshadow the good plant of their Devotion to God and humanity.

They are ever vigilant and careful.
They achieve great things for the good of humanity.
God crowns their Devotion with success.

4

It is thus the devotees of the Lord, with their constant care and service, with their vigilance and watchfulness, with the love and sincerity of their heart, nourish the good seed of their Devotion to God and humanity.

The good seed of their Devotion to God and humanity grows into a seedling, the seedling becomes a tender plant, and the tender little plant grows into a big tree with numberless branches. The Lord rest under its shade, and the tree yields its rich fruits of usefulness to humanity.

The one ambition of the vigilant servants of God is that His children may enjoy the rich results of their labour without the restrictions of caste, creed or colour.

The one ambition of the vigilant servants of God is to be lost in conscious and intelligent meditation on Him in heaven and on earth.

THE MID-INDIA REGION

By Dr Henry H. Presler

Note: This regular feature in The India Cultures Quarterly is contributed by the director of the Department of Organized Research of Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, M.P., India, who assumes that a regional or even local approach to the study of Indian cultures is an induction from the diverse data.

Religion as Function of Life Situation

Religion is that combination of myth and ritual enabling a particular group of humans to interpret and to attempt to control their destiny. A 'function' in this connection is that correlation between patterns of resources and behaviour that makes either pattern sometimes the cause and sometimes the effect of the other. Life situation is the total material, social and ideological context within which a particular group of humans is operating. The thesis of this paper is that their religion is both cause and effect of the particular life situation of the leather workers (chamars) described.

The differences between my thesis and some other these related to the problem of accounting for the connection (if any) between religion and its cultural matrix, are at least two:

(*a*) Certain students have proposed one factor as the determinant of all phases of culture. My thesis differs in avoiding a unilateral explanation for all cultures, and in prefering to seek for explanation in a combination of factors.

(*b*) The other difference marking my proposal is simply this: Some theories defend a one-way determinant (for instance the material influences the immaterial, but not vice versa), being persuaded that the factor argued is a cause and a cause only. I am urging that the influence among the factors is reciprocal, both causing and effecting, perhaps more cause at one time, but more effect at another.

The particular illustration thrown up for inspection here happens to be a group of ten families of Indian leather workers, living in a state of friendlessness, illiteracy and poverty. We might have selected a group characterized by friendship, literacy and wealth. The thesis, if valid, would hold true for such a case, also.

Leather workers are accorded a very low status in the prestige ladder of local society; indeed they would needs reach up to touch the first rung, but would not be allowed by the orthodox to place their little finger on that rung. There are very few groups lower than these who collect the carcasses of dead animals for the privilege of removing the hides. In spite of much propaganda to the effect that all men are to be treated equally, the leather workers are not included in the social affairs of most members of society, and are left in isolation and loneliness. It is difficult for them to overcome the impression that men avoid them.

This sense of friendlessness is intensified by their feeling of strangeness in Hinditown.* As emigrants, they forsook their ancestral home due to semi-famine conditions, and to alleged oppression from their superiors. Their dialect is akin to the local language, but marks them as strangers among the local people.

Crowded together in their ten huts, they look outside their circle to a forbidding social world, expecting affronts from some, and reserve from all.

Illiteracy

Not a person among them can read. Their oral scriptures and ritual systems are intact, known to adults.

Poverty

On arriving in Hinditown they did not obtain rights to follow their occupation as leather workers, and hired themselves out as day labourers. Some are carrying logs in a saw-mill. Others work on roads. They take whatever unskilled labour is offered. Most have irregular employment. The usual wage for a day's work is Re 1.50 (thirty-three cents in U.S.A. currency). In their poverty they found an undesirable spot near the railroad tracks, owned by a religious institution whose priest leases land plots for temporary shelters. The tank at the temple afforded enough water to mix with clay. They built the usual mud hut or *jhopri* with thatched roof. The huts are very close together, for mutual protection. This "huddling" keeps them in almost immediate contact with their kind, and in constant danger from conflagration sweeping over the straw roofs and destroying human life. The annual rental of Rs. 10 for the land plot for the single room hut is a week's wages, not much for the higher income brackets but considerable for an income which is not sufficient for food. The daily wage of Re 1.50 is not enough for one person, let alone husband, wife and children.

These three—friendlessness, illiteracy and poverty—are among the important factors in the life situation of these leather workers. These suffice for the purpose of illustrating the way in which religion interprets and tries to control that situation, being itself limited by it.

The Interaction between Religion and Friendlessness

The persons under discussion begin by calling themselves Raidasis, or followers of Raidas who flourished in the 15th century A.D. His sect is found chiefly in the United Provinces, but adherents are scattered over north and middle India. Its members are low castes. Raidas was himself a leather-worker who laid stress on *bhakti* or devotional faith in God, as (in his opinion) infinitely superior to knowledge of the scriptures (which the people being described cannot read in any case.) As natural among members of a despised community, stress was also

* A fictitious name for a real city in India.

laid on the unimportance of social status. Salvation was not the monopoly of the literates, nor enshrined in Sanskrit, but is freely offered to the masses in their own varnacular. A man can be a saint no matter what his rank. To circumvent the cultural respect for high castes, shared also by the leather workers, the Raidasis say that their leader was originally a Brahman, but was cursed by his teacher for having taken alms from a shopkeeper who had dealings with leather workers. Raidas at once died and was reborn immediately in the home of a shoemaker, and as remembering all he had known as a Brahman. When a babe the saint demanded religious initiation, and as a man gave shoes free to any pious pilgrim coming to Benares. The ambivalent emotion towards high castes is thus expressed.

Vicariously overcoming the poverty in their own lives, the Raidasis say that God Himself intervened and made their saint wealthy, who in turn founded a monastery for his disciples.

Reflecting their feeling of friendlessness, Raidas is said to have been persecuted by social and political superiors, but in the end he caused the priests and the king to be converted unto him. The biography of Raidas thus interprets the living chamars as having the best religion, as being equal to all men in the opinion of the Deity, and as having had a leader who overcame social stigma, illiteracy and poverty by devotion and by the miraculous intervention of God. In other words, the leader controled the three factors that inconvenience his followers today.

The mythology around Raidas helps them to re-define themselves to themselves, and to ameliorate the societal stigma under which they suffer. One such myth goes like this:

> Raidas was no other than a tanner, a renowned devotee of the river goddess. She was pleased by his intense love for her, even though he was but an untouchable. One day a priest sauntered along the river bank on his way to perform religious rites in the holy stream. The saint begged the priest to offer on his behalf, a coin of lowest denomination (a pice) and a betel nut. At first the priest demured, but finally took the things and carelessly tossed them into the waters, as not worthy of a ritual. Behold, Mother River stretched forth her hand and caught the offerings, and then threw back a pearl on the bank. The priest was supposed to give the jewel to Raidas, but instead hurried off to curry favour with the queen. She was delighted to receive the pearl, and insisted that any jewels must be in matched pairs to bring out their beauty. She demanded a mate to it on pain of death. The priest fell on his knees, confessing the origin of the pearl. The queen was possessed with the lure of a matching gem and herself went to the house of the lowly tanner, who was making shoes on her arrival. Her royal highness begged Raidas to obtain another bauble. The saint called for an earthen pot of Ganges water, and then said, If the heart be pure, the goddess can appear even in a pot of holy water. So saying he thrust his hand beneath the liquid and drew out a matching pearl, of the same size and of equal beauty. This made such an impression on the queen that she fell down before him and henceforth became his disciple.

This oral scripture is one of those that enable these people to retain an inner sense of worth against the friendlessness of the society. It helps to bind them together and to interpret themselves as underestimated participants in the total culture pattern.

But the other teachings of Raidas (one of the disciples of the famous Kabir), are not much in evidence among this group. Theology and cult have been so modified by the surrounding orthodox religion, that these people believe and practice the very doctrines and rituals against which their saint inveighed so strongly. In other words, their life situation functioned to preserve the title (and with it the assumed high status in the Deity's sight) but not the cult. The name of Raidas raises their own estimation of themselves, and impresses others; but what Kabir and Raidas were actually driving at in the way of theological and moral reformation, that they don't fully know or follow.

In sum, the title, Raidasis, avoids the social odium of the conventional name, chamars. The sectarian name helps them to face resolutely the unfriendliness of the society.

We turn now to their first major problem after reaching the city, namely, how to import some divinities whom they could call their own and interact with. The strange city augmented their sense of isolation. There were two reasons why they could not adopt any local divinities: (1) Local people would not want them near their shrines, due to the social ranking system. (2) They did not know the local divinities, had not heard many of their names, and were unacquainted with their rituals.

Among the earliest arrivals was the father-in-law of an old woman who has one of the main private shrines. On arriving here about twenty-two years ago, he had no god to worship, and hence was compelled to go at least once a year some 150 miles north of our city to a well-known pilgrimage center. Generally he went at the spring festival, in order to have a *darshan* or beautific sight of the gods and goddesses symbolized there in statuary.

(Here I interrupt to remark that both Raidas and Kabir were deadly enemies of three dimensional symbols, so that this father-in-law was acting oppositely to their teachings and practices. This merely underlines what was said previously; these people took the distinction but not the religion of Raidas).

He explained his plight (being without any god or goddess) to the functionary at the pilgrimage center. The priest performed a ritual by which the father-in-law was enabled to bring back to the strange city four of the possible 160 gods and goddesses at that place. (Raidas was a strict monotheist, so that this acceptance of four divinities but further emphasizes the groups choosing only what suits their life situation. Orthodox image worship is the very woof of their total culture pattern.) He brought the four divinities from the temple on the top of the hill there. This means, that he brought their spiritual presences as well as their forms, in human likenesses. On reaching our city he went to the betel leaf field, with cemetery adjoining, which was to be the site of the present settlement of ten families. He selected a spot for the sacred dwelling place, and raised a mud platform. Then he engaged an ecstatic to perform the *sthapana* (ceremony for establishing and

fixing divinities at a new place of residence) rite. This priest was an aboriginal, a member of the Kol tribe, also low in social status. The Kols are the religious functionaries of these chamars in their homeland and one of them happened to be here. The *sthapana* was accompanied by fervid singing of lyrical ballads, and loud drum beating on a *dholak* (a percussion instrument made of a ring of wood over which a tanned skin is stretched).

The importation of these four goddesses inserted friendly divinities into an unfriendly environment. Religion responded to the life situation.

The abhorrence of the chamars for their social degradation is reflected in the absence of ranking among the four divinities. All are thought to be residing in the one shrine, and no one of them is chief. They are all equal. Their symbols are three flags, and thus two divinities (who are twins) have the third flag. The four are sisters, and the other 156 divinities are in the air somewhere hovering around the pilgrimage center up in the north country. The offerings to the four sisters are also without distinction; they share alike in two black bangles, two wooden tops with which to amuse themselves, and one red thread (the *rakhi* bracelet which sisters annually give to their brothers). As among real friends there is no discrimination, so the divinities symbolize the sort of society that is friendly.

There are other kinds of unfriendliness to be countered by the chamars' religion. First, there are the thieves ready to snatch their few belongings at any unguarded moment, or when the ten families happen to be absent at the same time. Second, there is the *galli* (verbal abuse) directed their way by social superiors. *Galli* is not the same as profanity and must be heard and understood in the vernacular to be sufficiently appraised. The shrill, screaming voice of an expert in *galli* will make a stout heart quail. Third, there is that burial ground with the unknown spirits of the departed. Those who take reincarnation seriously must reckon with the cemetery, especially since the departed are likely to redress the wrongs against themselves when in the flesh, by afflicting the living. Fourth, there is the omnipresence of death, awaiting every individual.

The four divinities entrusted to the father-in-law for conducting to Hinditown, are believed to control, in some measure, these four troublers. One of these sisters is able to keep thieves at bay. Another has as her special province the control of verbal abusers. Again, one is able to keep the spirits of the departed in tow, while the fourth is herself the goddess of death.

Thus, religion for these people is a system of myth and ritual whereby they seek to reinterpret their actual life situation to themselves and to control the unfriendliness of the culture towards themselves. The prestige of the name of an acknowledged saint of India is appropriated, but not his theology. The myths enabling them to vicariously triumph over societal ill-will, are told again and again. But to nerve them against

the dreaded new place, they fall back upon the polytheism against which Raidas inveighed, and bring divinities from the homeland. To control the thieves, abusers, departed spirits and death itself, Raidas' rapturous monotheism does not suffice for them, and they resort to the orthodox goddesses who seem to come to grips with the four enemies. The religion appears to be a function of their life situation, and also to perpetuate their focus on certain few aspects of it.

The Interaction between religion and Illiteracy

Groups with written scriptures profess to know what the Deity requires of them. But how are illiterates to know? Their oral scriptures are not systematized or codified, and consist chiefly in myths (traditional stories of religious import, relating to the activities of supernatural beings, which stories are handed down by tradition). These myths may not enunciate those principles from which one would know what is required by the divinity in a particular time, place or emergency. Some means must be found to learn the divine requirement. The religion of these people provides immediate access to and conversation with the divinities, through ecstatic mediums. It is pertinent to translate literally what the chamars have to say.

There are two annual *pujas** regularly observed by us. One is in the spring (March—April), and the other is in the fall (Sept.—October). Before the actual festival comes, we start singing to our goddesses at night, usually from 9 p.m. to 12 p.m. In this night celebration, some one of our male ecstatics gets *bhau* (ecstacy, characterized by speaking in an unknown tongue and uncoordinated physical movements of an excessive and wild character). Then one of the goddesses speaks through him and makes known her wishes to us (this mediumship occurs after the extravagant behaviour when the ecstatic quiets somewhat and speaks as if in a trance state, using the vernacular. People go near to him and ask the goddess in him to tell them what she wants). But if no one gets *bhau*, then the general singing goes on. In this case, the next day every family brings the offerings (described below under the heading, Interaction of Religion with Poverty). Our head ecstatic does the rituals and then sits down before the sacred symbols drawn on the floor, and puts himself into deep meditation, looking with a fixed gaze toward the images. Others present who also can act as ecstatics imitate him. In this posture and state, somebody or other will get *bhau*, and so reveal the wishes or blessing of the goddesses.

* The word *puja* has been inaccurately translated as worship service by some Westerners with Christian cultural backgrounds. Actually, the term does not indicate the Christian act of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition. *Puja* rather means the sort of homage and celebration rendered by subjects to their king, especially when he goes on tour to visit them. They greet him, welcome him, give presents and expect the same in return. The greatest such *durbar* in the 20th century may have been the visit of the Prince of Wales to India in 1912. He received in Delhi the felicitations of loyal princes and commoners from all over the land. When the Prince of Wales paused in my city, the local nobles competed for the privilege of entertaining him. The one chosen built a special palace for the occasion, and two British lions still recline at its entrance within shouting distance of my typewriter. Gardens and walks, fountains and elevated seats were specially constructed for the royal visitor, and have fallen into decay and ruin. *Puja* is more a celebration of a divine visitation.

The above is their general statement of how they find out what is to be done with reference to the biannual anxiety of the ten families to keep in harmony with the four divine sisters. To clinch the point, I shall add their words with reference to special festivals.

There are two kinds of special *pujas* observed by us. The first is in the spring and fall. We sit down before the goddesses before the puja days to get to know what they wish to have us to do for them. We (the house owner and a few other male members from the surrounding huts whom we have to call), take our places at the shrine on an appointed day, and invite our goddesses in the name of the queen goddess at the pilgrimage center in the north country. We ask them to let us know what we, her devotees and servants should do for her. At first we start praises led by one of us who knows how to spin verses with the music of drum and cymbals. Then when in the proper mood of meditation, and having no other concern or feeling than that of the goddesses, we start one after another with folded hands to earnestly request the goddesses to come upon us and to reveal their wishes. Gradually the songs stop and the ecstatics get *bhau*. They shake themselves forward and backward. Then comes the spirit of the goddess upon whomsoever she chooses. Sometimes almost all present get *bhau*, one after another. Otherwise, only a few get *bhau*. Now, whosoever first possesses the spirit, starts speaking for the goddess or goddesses and says what she wants and what we have to do. This lasts for 20 or 30 minutes, and the ecstatics act like mad men and speak vehemently without stop. Their words are often without understanding, but the ecstatics reveal the wishes of the goddess when asked repeatedly. When we come to know the thing, then we plan to do it.†

The informent goes on to say that the goddesses usually demand either a *jawara* (barley or sprouted grains) offering, or an animal sacrifice. One more quotation will follow, to illustrate how an illiterate people (lacking written and fixed definitions of divine requirements) fall back on the experimental authority of ecstacy and alleged communications with the divinities themselves.

The second kind of special ceremony has no set time or place, and becomes necessary whenever the goddesses wish to contact us on their own accord. Whenever certain misfortunes (caused by spirits or other goddesses or our own four goddesses) enter our locality, our *mukhia* (community leader) comes to know through severe pain on his body caused by the goddesses. Then he consults with us. To find out the actual thing troubling us, and what remedy to apply, we again go through the ritual of invoking the spirits to come upon us, that is, the spirits causing the trouble. In *bhau* a medium makes known to us who he or she is, from where he or she has come, and what is demanded of us. Sometimes our own goddesses, wishing for special favour, hurt us or our leader, or one individual. In the latter case, one man bears the trouble, a dangerous situation. So we all help to meet the goddesses' demands.

The people of India have tremendous respect for the sacred books in the Sanskrit language. A functionary able to read and recite Sanskrit is accorded high honour. But these chamars have neither Sanskrit books nor vernacular books, and as people without a book, evolve a religion offering a substitute authority. The religion is in one sense an effect of a life situation; in another sense it perpetuates that life situa-

† Ecstacy is not to be 'explained' as merely an expressive movement, or as an abnormal psychic state induced by group pressures. The life situation out of which it arises, including illiteracy, must be included in one's estimate.

tion, by substituting the discipline of ecstacy for the discipline of learning to read.

The Interaction of Religion and Poverty

Three inconsistent cult procedures manifest the mutual dependence of poverty and religion among these people. (1) They seldom perform a ritual because in India, rituals take artefacts and ingredients that cost money. (2) Whenever a ritual is performed ostensibly for the goddesses, the chamars usually eat most of the offering themselves. (3) Periodically they pay (relative to their income) extraordinarily large sums for festival rituals to honour and placate their goddesses. The following may make these points clearer.

Regarding the paucity of rituals, this dearth contrasts with the ordinary practice of India's masses with a modicum of economic security. Those somewhat higher in economic resources will certainly offer flowers and water daily. The next higher level will add incense, oil lamps at night, and copper coins to the daily observances. Still higher rankings may engage a priest to assist them in daily rituals. Most believers above the chamar level will keep their private shrines in repair and colour, covered with fresh blossoms. The shrines of these ten families are in total disuse most of the time, and may not even be swept. When questioned, they explain that their goddesses are not greedy for offerings, which is convenient for them who cannot furnish them except occasionally.

Pertaining to the matter of eating most of the offerings themselves, these people manage to satisfy the divinities and their own hunger at the same time. This also is helpful to the poor. The doctrine that devotees may eat foods offered to idols is believed and practiced. They say that the goddesses take their *haq* (share), leaving the rest for them. (They do not say that the goddesses eat the essence of the offering, leaving them the rest, but frankly admit eating the self-same stuff presented to the image). This occurs in the following cases:

(*a*) *Hom* Sacrifice

This is one of the ancient rites coming down from earliest times, in which grains and clarified butter are cast into a fire pit, to the chanting of Sanskrit verses. The orthodox require four learned priests to perform it. Somehow these chamars have got hold of their own version of *hom*, and manage to imitate their superiors in the general practice of the ritual, but, of course, without the Sanskrit and without the details. I have never seen the upper classes associating *hom* with ecstacy, nor eating any of the ingredients.

These people calling themselves Raidasis, begin by performing their version of the ancient rite (although Raidas himself was against all such rituals), and use it to induce ecstacy. After the ecstacy, they tell me, 'all eatables that are there are distributed to the gathering as the *prasad* (derived from a Sanskrit root meaning 'favour of a divinity') of the goddesses, and thus ends the usual *hom* puja'.

(*b*) *Bali* or Animal Sacrifice

During the preceding song services, the man providing for the sacrifice, distributes *beerie* (Indian cigarettes), *tambacoo* (tobacco to chew), and *pan* (the favourite chewing narcotic of the masses consisting of the arecca nut, lime paste, various spices and condiments, and the leaf of the *naglata*). All these are consumed by the people themselves.

On the day of the sacrifice, the sponsor provides rice, flour, oils, and the carcass of the sacrificed animal. The animal demanded by the goddesses through the ecstatic may be a *bakrah* (male goat), or a *suar ka bachha* (male piglet), or a *murga* (cock). If the sponsor be the community it is likely the first can be afforded, but if a private individual, 'he tries to provide a piglet, and if unable to meet the expense, then a cock. Whatever the goddess wants, we must offer; if one man cannot be found to provide it, then all of us must combine to give it'. In either case, all unite to eat most of it: the head is given to the functionary, the blood is poured out on the ground for the goddesses, and the carcass is consumed by all after cooking it along with flour and rice cakes.

A further accompaniment of the general feast, is the fasting beforehand. If the sponsor be one man, he fasts for nine days previously, eating only a little fruit and drinking juices at nightfall. Naturally this reduces the household expense for food, and helps to pay for the feast. If the community at large sponsors the feast, then all may fast for some days beforehand. There is, of course, no admitted connection between the fasting and the expense of the feast. The people say they fast to get supernatural power (*tapas* originally meant mortifications not for moral reformation but for the acquisition of supernatural powers by holy men who were sometimes able to get even gods into their control. That is to say, their *tapas* was so extraordinary that they obtained more supernatural power than the gods possessed). But whatever the reason for the fasting, it helps to meet expenses of the feast.

It may also be noted that sooner or later every man is expected to sponsor a religious feast. This means that each adult feeds all the other adults during one round of responsibilities, and thus the individual comes out at least even. In view of the fasting, he may come out better than even. This depends upon the market prices which vary with the seasons.

In other words, religion interacts with poverty so as to sanctify part of existence, to obtain the willingness of the goddesses to desist from troubling the people, or even their positive favour, to solidify the social bonds, and to accomplish all this with a few heavy expenditures, which are cancelled out in the end by participation in the religious feasts given by others.

This brings me to the third paradoxical point, the extraordinarily large sums occasionally expended for religious purposes. The masses of India are utterly sincere, with their attention focused on other considerations than those mentioned in this article. Realization of the facts given above is no doubt there, but in the margin. These people

wish to placate their divinities or to honour and please them on their periodic visits to the community (*busti*). Moreover, sometimes they are desperate for supernatural help, and dedicate a large proportion of their resources to the *puja*. By a large proportion I mean about four months' steady income to a *puja* occurring once in three years. At their subsistence level, this is, in my observation of their life situation, a remarkable gift.

These Raidasis say that every man should 'sow *jawara*' at least once in three years. The word *jawara* actually means grain sprouts, and while usually barley, wheat or even rice and some other grains may be planted. Over a period of three years, it is likely that the average chamar could somehow get together enough saving and loan money to finance the rituals.

In this expensive procedure, the sponsor buys three or four earthen jars for rich earth. He sows the seed and takes the jars inside his house to allow them to grow yellow sprouts for nine days. The sponsor fasts by day, and each evening stages a singing party in which musicians may be hired. This is called *kirtana*, in which professional bards and instrumentalists render myths and epics in fervid song. Large crowds gathering from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. have to be supplied with refreshments. Further, the functionary doing the nine days of rituals for the sprouting grain must be paid. On the ninth day there is a procession to the bank of some water body full regalia of best possible cloth and accoutrements. The sprouts are immersed (the meaning of which need not concern us here). These things are then crowned with a community feast in which all participate. But if this last be beyond the capacity of the sponsor, he must at least provide *kanya bhoj* (Virgins Feast), in which the unmarried girls are elaborately fed, in addition to as many high caste priests as the sponsor dares to invite. For this purpose, a high caste cook must be hired.

Each Raidasi feels theological imperative to sow *jawara* within a maximum of every third year. Of course, there are many subordinate motives for doing this (prestige, social solidarity, recreation, celebration and the like). But with this community, and most others of my acquaintance, the *jawara* expenditure is primarily religious. My point is that its frequency and nature are accommodations to the poverty of the community, and in turn consume their savings and keep them economically poor. Yet, the celebration of theological and social values which the sowing of *jawara* affords, the parade through the streets before startled social betters, help to keep life meaningful and livable, and to furnish these chamars with strengthening memories for the drab days that lie ahead.

There are other features of their routines which interact with religion, and demonstrate religion to be a function of their life situation. This paper is not intended to be exhaustive. My hypothesis suggests that these three are among the important ones for this particular group only, and that other features might be important to other life situations.

(A New Translation)

Chapter XIX

Not Slandering

Stanza 1

A man who does not slander has something good even if he does no other good by word or deed.

Stanza 2

If there is something more wicked than condemning virtue and committing evil deeds it is speaking maliciously of a man in his absence, and with smiles in his presence.

Stanza 3

Virtue (the law of Dharma) says it is more profitable to die than to live slandering and lying.

Stanza 4

When alone with a man you can speak devastatingly of him. But in his absence do not breathe a single syllable against him.

Note: The above is only a paraphrase. The following is more literal: speak before his eyes blasting his eyes, but behind, do not tell words that look back.

Stanza 5

The hollowness of the heart of the man who (merely) praises virtue is revealed by his slandering words.

Stanza 6

Let him who would tell other people's evils realize that his own voices will be published.

Stanza 7

They that do not know how to sustain friendship by joyous words, will separate even relatives by their unkind remarks.

Stanza 8

If they publish the short-comings of even their own relatives, what will they not do if others are concerned?

Stanza 9

(Mother) earth whose conduct is virtuous (according to dharma) bears patiently him who slanders behind and smiles in front of persons.

Stanza 10

If people would critically look into their own faults as they do into others, what evil will be there in this world to living beings? (answer negligible)

N.B. Some commentators interpret the last clause as referring not to the world at large, but to their own selves. If so this stanza runs thus. If people would critically examine their own faults as they do others, what evil will be found in their lives? (answer none.)

Chapter XX

According to Valueless Words

Stanza 1

Many frown at him who speaks valueless words. But all despise him.

Stanza 2

Speaking valueless words before many is worse than doing undesirable things to friends.

Stanza 3

A man's useless words indicate his uselessness.

Stanza 4

Words that have no virtue are useless. They take away the pleasant and good out of the inner man.

Note: The word translated virtue is that which makes a thing good. The virtue of words according to Tamil Ethics is truth, and gracefulness.

Stanza 5

The greatness and glory of even a good man will vanish if he continues speaking uselessly.

Stanza 6

He who speaks uselessly is not a man. He is chaff.

Note: Chaff looks like a grain of seed. Inside there is nothing. Similarly the man who speaks useless words looks like a man. His thought contents amount to nothing.

Stanza 7

Even if great men use unpleasant words, it is better not to use valueless words.

N.B. (1) A supposition contrary to fact is implied here, which would mean that great men are not likely to use unpleasant words.

(2) Great men here means great in character and knowledge.

Stanza 8

These men of learning who seek rare values will not use words of bare values.

N.B. Rare values are heaven, and not being born again.

Stanza 9

Those that have clear insight without any confusion, will not speak uselessly even when they forget.

Stanza 10

Speak profitable words; avoid useless words.

Chapter XXI

Fear of Evil Deeds

Stanza 1

Men of wicked deeds are not afraid of the intoxication called evil deeds, while men of good deed are afraid of it.

Note: The word translated wicked men might also be translated as 'those that have done evil (in their past life)'. The doctrine of Karma permeates all Tamil literature. So, probably that is what the poet has in mind.

Stanza 2

Evil deeds bring forth evil effects. So they are to be dreaded more than fire.

Stanza 3

Not retaliating evil for evil is the crown of all knowledge.

Stanza 4

Even unconsciously let not one contemplate to do evil to his neighbour. Other wise the just results of evil thinking will react on the thinker.

Stanza 5

Let not one resort to evil to overcome poverty, otherwise he will find himself in greater poverty.

Stanza 6

If one does not wish himself to be surrounded by evil, let him do not evil to his neighbours.

Stanza 7

However hating an enemy might be, his enmity would be overcome. But the enmity (to one's own self) caused by his evil deeds will follow him unceasingly.

Note: While there is a reference to the unbreakable law of karma here, the poet is putting his finger on a psychological truth, that an evil thought and deed acts as a boomarang and hurts the evil doer far more than he realizes.

Stanza 8

However, far the shadow of a man might be cast, it reaches his feet at last, similarly, will destruction reach the doer of evil.

Stanza 9

He who wants to protect himself should never associate himself with evil.

Stanza 10

Know, that he who does no evil to others is himself free from any evil.

INTRODUCING STRANGERS TO HINDUISM

Dr Henry H. Presler

Hindu-Moslem Fraternization

This morning* I begin by laying down a thesis, and shall continue by defending it. The thesis is: Among the Indian masses there is a significant amount of fraternization (in religious and magical practices) between Hindus and Moslems. This thesis requires more preliminary comments.

Notice the first words: 'Among the Indian Masses. . .' Collusion between Hindus and Moslems occurs among ordinary people, among the plebians. It occurs with commoners. Simple and sincere Hindus and Moslems, wanting in property and formal education, facing the Oriental struggle to maintain a family in food and shelter, together share certain elemental needs that transcend the boundries of any one religion, and which draw them together. The Hindu-Moslem fraternization about which I am to speak, is among the Indian masses.

Furthermore, my thesis asserts 'a significant amount' of such fraternization. It is not rare in the Mid-India region familiar to me. Rather, this inter-faith friendship meets the stranger frequently enough to impress him. You see, we strangers have read books on Comparative Religion in which one chapter is devoted to Hinduism, and another to Islam, as if the two religions were as distinct from one another as the divisions in the table of contents. Their doctrines have been contrasted with such isolating words as theism and pantheism. We are conditioned by such books to suppose that Hindus and Moslems hold theologically aloof from each other. But I am now insisting that among the common folk such doctrinal barriers are often ineffective, and that a significant number of people seek inter-communal experience.

Again, my thesis maintains that the fraternization is in religious and magical practices. This may be even more surprising to strangers. I assert that the two groups sometimes join in a common religious quest, participate in the same festivals, seek an equivalent divine experience from a single divinity, testify to identical miracles, and perform the same rituals. In our city, such theological fraternization has reached the point where Hindu religious functionaries serve the Moslems, and vice versa. I have seen multitudes drawn together out of both faiths, forgetting their traditions and experimenting together in a common religious discipline. These gatherings have no concern with politics, no thought of economic rivalries, no interest in international 'problems'. The common people are rather consumed by a hunger for the reality of God, and for control, through supernatural help, of their pitiable situation.

You listeners are, of course, well aware of the current opinion of Indian leaders to the effect that all religions are the same. Yet, it startles some to be told that Hindus and Moslems who cannot read

* One in a course of lectures delivered at Landour Language School, May 1958.

such an opinion, are acting in harmony with it. Any student of Hinduism should expect religio-magico fraternization among the Hindu and Moslem masses, not generally and uniformly, but frequently.

So much for my thesis—now to defend it.

I find three practices in which Hindus and Moslems fraternize together: namely, the practice of ecstacy, the practice of the *akhara*, and the practice of magic, listed in the order of frequency from more to less.

I

I begin with ecstacy. By ecstacy I mean a state of emotional rapture, in which the subject goes into a trance. While in this state he is quite insensible to ordinary external stimuli. He may become passive and lost in introspection, or he may give out an intensity of joyous emotion. He may have visions, enter into an immediate divine experience, or become a medium through which divinity speaks to the laity. Ecstacy is by his definition superior to any other sort of religious exercise (such as morals, prayers, sacrifices, scripture reading) because it puts the devotee into actual contact with the divinity. The ecstatic needeth not that anyone should tell him concerning God, for he himself hath seen God. In my Indian city and in the mid-India region round about it, both Hindus and Moslems seek this blessed experience, and what is more, they come together to attain it. The attitude of the Hindus has been put to me many times in approximately these words: We know that our Moslem brothers have contact with a great divinity, because through them that divinity has helped us. (Then they give some testimony to show how the Moslem divinity cured their disease, or gave a child to a barren couple, or warned them of some danger, or found and restored a lost article. Or, the Hindu will tell how the Moslem divinity caught him up into seventh heaven and revealed that which is unspeakable).

The attitude of the Moslem, on the other hand, amounts to this: We Moslems sometimes do not have the piety or character or discipline to make ourselves acceptable to the divinity, or, whatever may be our piety, it is surpassed by a Hindu brother. The divinity choses whom he will, and occasionally that person is a Hindu, whose peculiar talent and make-up best fits him to be the medium between us and the supernatural. It is not a question of what label attaches to a man, but whether he can get into communication with the Spirit.

Both Hindu and Moslem commoners are in a frame of mind for even more than fraternization; they combine in a fusion of spiritual efforts. They become, during the practices about to be described, as one people.

The word for ecstacy in Hindi is *bhau*, and the word in Urdu, is *hal*. Each language group knows both words. If you ask the Moslems, What is the difference between what the Hindus call *bhau*, and what you call *hal*? . . . they will answer: 'No difference . . . same thing'. And if you ask the Hindus to explain the difference in meaning between what lies behind both words, they will say that no difference exists.

It is further to be noted in our area that neither community can state the historical origin of the practice of ecstacy. I have tried to discover some connection between Sufiism and the Mid-India type of Moslem ecstacy, but the ordinary Mohammedans in our part of the country do not seem to be acquainted with Sufiism. This led me to suppose that they must have learned the practice of ecstacy from the Hindus. I then turned to the Hindus, inquiring from them as to the historical, legendary or scriptural source of ecstacy, and was directed by them to the Sanskrit-knowing pandits. The pandits, however, repudiated ecstacy, denied to it any scriptural support, and accused the Hindu masses of error. My next query was addressed to the aboriginal tribes of which the Kols and Gonds are locally most numerous, supposing that Hindus and Moslems borrowed the practice of ecstacy from the earlier inhabitants of our remote jungles. But, I did not find any notice of ecstacy in the written accounts of these tribes, nor did my personal discussions with the tribals themselves reveal that they practice ecstacy as intensively as the Hindus.

In ecstacy we may face a phenomena that is inter-faith, not confined to any one community, not originating in a particular locality. Ecstacy may not be borrowed from anyone; it may be discovered by each group independently. In India, more than in most other countries, there is a consuming desire for union with divinity, for merging of one's soul with the Deity, if only for a brief and ecstatic moment. This longing is felt by Indians brought up in the ideological atmosphere of the Vedanta. An Indian, be he Hindu or Moslem, breathes the same traditional atmosphere, participates consciously or unconsciously in the same spiritual aspiration. It is natural, therefore, that Hindus and Moslems should drift together and fuse their pious yearnings at the feet of any promising guru, or at the grave of a reputable saint.

That they do unite is a matter of common observation to those of us accustomed to move among both peoples. Some Moslems seek ecstatic communion at certain Hindu shrines, and some Hindus do the same at Moslem sacristies. In both cases the sacred location is of the smaller, less formal variety. Moslems do not go to a temple, and Hindus do not visit a mosque. Instead, each visits the less conspicuous, the out-of-the way, poorer sacrarium of the other religion. It will be the sort of altar that is out-in-the open, without walls or roof, and which can be visited without the necessity of entering a building. As such, it is also the most public and sometimes the most popular among all sacred locations.

It is my observation that more Hindus go to Moslem altars, than vice versa. The reasons probably include the following: Moslems have more frequent and regular seances than the Hindus, and so attract heart-hungry seekers after visions and blessings more often.

Moslems lack the elaborate paraphernalia of Hinduism, and are thrown back, not on imagery and sacrifices, but on personal religious experience; they specialize in ecstacy, having fewer alternatives. Thus, Hindus are more often attracted to Moslem rites.

The Hindus are accustomed to annual or bi-annual, but rarely to monthly ecstatic practices. On such occasions the entire population of the locale, including both Hindu and Moslem settlements (bustis) may go to the Hindu altar, surrounding the sacred spot, and behaving identically. When the *panda* or *ojha* or *gunia* (titles of the lower castes for illiterate priests) is seized and overpowered by the divinity, both Hindus and Moslems are deeply affected. Men (rarely women) of either community enter into the trance state and become mediums, while the great majority of laymen accord them honour and even obeisance, consulting the ecstatics and obeying their instructions.

The Moslems, however, have weekly schedules, and sometimes bi-weekly occasions, when their *mujavirs* may be expected to contact the spirit of the dead, while in a trance state. I know several score of such graves at which the great majority of seekers are Hindus. At some the only Moslem present is the ecstatic himself, the entire clientele being Hindu.

The Moslems also observe the annual *Urs*, or death anniversary of a saint's death, at which, in our region, several thousand persons congregate. The functionaries at such anniversaries may number as many as forty or fifty men, all of them enter the trance state. Those going into ecstacy are both Hindus and Moslems, who can be distinguished only by thier dress, not by their behaviour. At these large gatherings I have not once noticed a concern for religious labels. The mixed crowd gives itself sincerely to the highest of man's aspirations: the beautific vision. In ecstacy, therefore, we see the first and most important evidence of Hindu-Moslem fraternization.

II

The second evidence is the *akhara*, an institution patronized chiefly by young men interested in the cultivation of physical strength, music and religion. The akhara is to the Indian masses what the Y.M.C.A. is to the American masses, with the difference that an American city of 300,000 population will have two or three Y.M.C.A.s, whereas our Indian city of that size has about one hundred akharas.

A typical akhara is a neighbourhood institution, supported by old and young. Somebody will have rented or donated a small, ordinary mud-wall, tile roofed enclosure of one to three rooms. In it is a wrestling pit, containing sand soaked in various oils and vermillion, a variety of weights for lifting, an even wider variety of fencing weapons, and the usual red loin cloths worn by young athletes. Also, there is collection of musical instruments, including drums, cymbals and a harmonium, some of the larger akharas having enough for a small choir and orchestra. Finally, there will be an image or a symbol of the divinity, or several such, but one main one. It is the duty of all members to pay their respects to that divinity when entering or leaving the akhara building, and to be present at the weekly, monthly and annual rituals of religion. Mixed akharas have a Hindu symbol at one end of the gymnasium, and a Moslem symbol at the other end.

The usual membership of an akhara is between thirty and fifty, and the age span is from about ten to thirty-five years. The men enthusiasts often exhibit splendidly developed bodies, and muscles of considerable strength and agility. Each akhara has at least one *Ustad* or teacher of wrestling, self-defence, fencing and gymnastics, and possibly one or two assistants. The annual three-day celebrations beginning on Nagpanchmi, produce city-wide matches and struggles for championships, besides extended processions and exhibitions in the streets.

There are both Hindu akharas and Moslem akharas, and neither community has been able to account for the origin of the akhara as an institution. When asked, they reply that they don't know how akharas ever started, or who started them. The majority of akharas have either Hindu members only, or Moslem members only.

A minority of the akharas have *both* Hindu and Mohammedan members; perhaps twenty per cent of the total are of mixed membership. These mixed akharas provide us with the second instance of Hindu-Moslem fraternization. There will be only one *ustad*, and whether Hindu or Moslem, the entire membership will render him absolute obedience, and touch his feet when greeting or leaving him.

The akhara, therefore, provides the more energetic and forceful young men of each religion an opportunity for fraternization. They enter into the mutually pleasant experience with enthusiasm. My point is that the akhara provides the basis for real friendship between Hindus and Moslems, even though the akhara is religiously oriented.

III

The third evidence of significant inter-faith fraternization among the Hindu and Moslem masses is the practice of magic. Many literate Indians regard magic as an affair of the jungle, not of the city, and tell us to go to the Gonds for information on magic. For some years I accepted their opinion. It was only after plotting the cases of observed magic on maps that the opposite appeared true. I now suspect that a large amount of magic occurs in the average Indian city, and have noted carefully its locations in our particular city. Magic occurs in the interstitial area, by which I mean an area of deterioration, between two different land-use sections or two or more variant population groups. An interstitial area is a kind of noman's land in a city, lying between two markedly different kinds of people, or between, say, a factory area and a railroad terminus. It consists of an indefinable belt of land running like a ribbon between two contrasting sections. It is usually occupied by economically poor and generally underprivileged classes.

But magic is not prevalent in every interstitial area of our city. It seems rather to flourish in that interstitial area between a Hindu and a Moslem community. You know that Hindus tend to live together and that Moslems exhibit the same tendency. Mixed residential areas of the two communities are rare in the urban context. The boundries of each group are known to everybody, because all can see the curtains

over the doors of the Moslem homes, and the unobstructed doors of the Hindu homes. Now, where the edges of a Moslem locale and of a Hindu locale run parallel to each other, magic often flourishes. A *nali* or stream often runs between the two communities, separating them.

Notice that the Moslems and the Hindus are in the same economic straits, suffering unemployment and poverty. Disease from the foul waters will have spread inward from both sides of the stream, carried by flies and rats. The money lenders will be threatening both communities with eviction. In these lamentable straits, the gods will have seemed to refuse most petitions for help. Men and women in desperation will be turning to some sudden and compelling solution of their problems. Magic promises that quick remedy, that forced change in their fortune.

Let me remind you again that I seldom find magic prevalent in a similar predicament where two contrasting Hindu communities live on both sides of the stream or when contrasting Moslems live on both sides. The mixed situation seems necessary. This is puzzling because the Moslems are supposed to eschew magic. Indeed, I have heard orthodox well-to-do Moslems threaten to punish a co-religionist caught practising magic. But the poor are under necessity, and may not know the stricture against it. Or, the Moslem *fakirs* come from outside, settle on the bank of the stream, and offer charms and talismans (*tawiz*). The Gond aboriginals may arrive on the Hindu side, with their overawing reputation for magic power. Perhaps desperate Hindus or Moslems try magic remedies, practise secretly, and acquire a clientele. Whatever the cause, Moslems cross that stream to the Hindu magicians; and Hindus cross the stream to the Moslems reputed to know spells (mantras). This is done privately and secretly, not publicly. To strangers the magicians deny that they are magicians. It is only when one 'gets on the inside' that he chances upon evidences of a flourishing trade in magic, in the Hindu-Moslem interstitial belt, in the private houses of inhabitants.

When, in summary, you review the three evidences of Hindu-Moslem fraternization, it becomes obvious that the fusion occurs under set conditions: 1. The populations are lower-class, unsophisticated, and sincere. 2. There is a common hunger for spiritual resource, or a common need for manly sport, or a common desperation, a need for immediate relief; in any case, the cause is commonly felt. 3. The piety is more emotional than intellectual. Intellectual knowledge of religion erects barriers making fraternization difficult. But emotional and willed piety bespeaks honest intentions, without subtelty.

This catholicity among the masses of India has been too often overlooked by students of her cultures. There is a significant amount of inter-cultural friendship operating at all times. Some students of the social sciences claim that cross-cultural contacts accelerate the mental processes and multiply the social inventions of the societies affected.

Yoga

Whenever the average student hears the words YOGA or Samkhyas, he associates them with the respective philosophical systems of founded by Patanjali or Kapila, and as such differing from the Vedanta. But in Gita these words have entirely or almost entirely different concepts. For instance in the classical yoga God has not a prominent place because the system of yoga is practical atheism, but in the Gita God (or Krishna) is all in all. The word Yoga has a long history behind it, and it has been used with different meanings. Professor Rawson discussing the history of the word shows that it has three primary meanings: (*a*) Concentration, (*b*) Communion, (*c*) effort. He also points out, that this word in the Upanishadic period (*c* 800-500 B.C.) was very often used to mean concentration and communion, in the Epic period (*c* 500-100 B.C.) was used to denote effort and communion and again in the later classical period (after 100 B.C.) effort and concentration.* Roughly, we can say that Yoga is the watch-word of Gita in the sense of control. It might be stated that the word is used in a special technical sense often, and in many cases it has been compounded with words meaning right work, right knowledge, or right devotion. Krishna himself is called 'Lord of Yoga'. Thus 18:75 reads:

> 'By Vyasa's grace I heard this doctrine of control, mysterious and supreme, as Krishna present there, Lord of control, himself did tell it.' (see also 11:4; 18:78).

The Gita speaks of a threefold yoga. But it should not be taken that there are three different water-tight compartments described. As man is a complex of action, knowledge and devotion, the yoga described in the Gita is a unity. In some cases one aspect of the method is emphasized and in other cases a different aspect is given more importance.

I. Definition of Yoga and Yogi

Yoga is defined in 2:48 as

'To be of balanced mind is called control'. And a yogi is described in 6:7 as he 'who has conquered self and come to peace' and whose 'Self remains absorbed in contemplation of the highest, in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, and dishonour too. The ascetic whose spirit is content with knowledge and experience, immovably exalted, victorious over sense, to whom earth, stones, and gold, are all alike is called controlled'. This control or checking is not easy. It is as difficult as checking the wind; 6:34 reads:

> 'For fickle is the mind, O Krishna, riotous, violent, stubborn, to check it is, I think, as though one checked the wind—a task most difficult.'

*J. N. Rawson; *Katha Upanishad* (Calcutta University Publications, 1937) p. 95 (dating of periods).

II. Karma Yoga

Gita does not state that man should give up all work. It says it is impossible for the world to get on without work.

'Do then the work thou art obliged to do; for work is better than no work; not even thy body from no-work can win its sustenance.' (3:8). But it does say that work must be controlled. This doctrine of controlled work is of outstanding importance in understanding the Gita. The author of the Gita has before him two ideals either of which has something good as well as bad. Gita's contribution to Indian philosophy is the discovery of a via media in which the defects of either of these two ideals drop out but the good points are conserved. The two ideals are the ones of Pravrtti and Nivrtti. Pravrtti encourages work. But its defect is each action produces an effect either good or bad, and these effects have a binding effect on the life of the individual—and this leads to an endless series of Karma and transmigration. On the other hand, if one examines the ideal of Nivrtti, it advocates complete renunciation of work. Renunciation of work is good no doubt because by complete renunciation the bonds of Karma and transmigration will be severed. But it is an impossible ideal. The solution offered by Gita is what is known as the doctrine of Nish Kam Karma. According to this, that which makes an act have a binding effect is desire. So, if a man does work, without desire for personal ends, he will have all the good of the ideal of renunciation or nivrtti and at the same time have all the advantage of the ideal of action without any of their evil effects. That is Gita differentiates between renunciation *of* action and renunciation *in* action. True renunciation is not giving up work or action but only the selfish desire of rewards and if that selfish desire is given up, real asceticism is attained. The following verses bring this out clearly:

> 'Renouncing works whose motive is desire, the sages know to it be renunciation; abandonment of the fruit of every work is called abandonment by the wise' (18:2).
>
> 'That man whose every enterprise is without desire or motive, whose work is burnt up in the fire of knowledge, the wise call learned' (4:18).

This desireless action, that is an action that has no selfish desire of rewards is best done by offering every action as a gift to Krishna:

> 'Whatever work thou workest, whatever thou dost eat, whatever be thine austere practices do all, O Son of Kunti, as an offering to me.' One must work for the sake of attaining perfection and also work is an example to others. Krishna himself works and thus sets an example for all others. Thus 3:24, 25 has:
>
> 'Did I not work my work, these worlds would fall in ruin, and I should be the worker of confusion and should destroy these creatures. Just as, to work attached, the ignorant work, O! Bharatta, so too, but unattached should the wise work, wishing to effect the guidance of this world.'

III. Jnana Yoga

Jnana or knowledge is not set as contrast to Karma, but as a complement or supplement to Karma. Indeed one does not usually attain knowledge without the preliminary discipline of Karma. Karma, indeed does continue till the end in Gita—and the only qualification is action must be done without any selfish desire for reward.

Gita is full of praises of the way of knowledge. For example in 4:36.

> 'Though thou art of all sinners the most sinful, by the boat of knowledge alone shalt thou passover all crookedness.':

And in 4:39 it is stated.

> 'The single hearted man of faith, with senses held in check, gains knowledge, having gained knowledge he comes right soon to the highest.'

As one reads the Gita one gains the impression that yoga bereft of knowledge is an impossibility.

In some ways jnana yoga might be summed up in the statement 'attainment of balanced mind' (Smatvam) Thus Gita 2:48 says:

> 'Steadfast in control, abandoning attachment Dhanamjaya, do works, viewing with balanced minds success and failure.' To be of balanced mind is called control.

Gita speaks of pairs—like heat and cold, love and hatred, joy and sorrow. The man of wisdom that is the one who has balanced mind looks with equanimity on these things. This is done by withdrawing the senses in from their natural bent towards outside. The following verses are clear:

'Who feels for nothing tender love, who, when he finds good or bad, rejoices not, nor hates, firm-set is that man's wisdom. And when he draws his senses in from things of sense on every side, as a tortoise draws in its limbs, firm-set is that man's wisdom' 2:57, 58.

By jnana yoga the aspirant comes to know that Not-Self is distinct from Self and that Krishna is Brahman. In 7:30 we have:

> 'Those who know in me Essential being, Essential Deity, and Essential sacrifice, and even at the time of going hence known to me—controlled of thought, they know me truly.'

IV. Bhakti Yoga

If the various yogas can be compared to the rungs of a ladder. Bhakti yoga is the topmost rung. Of course since man is unity of cognition, emotion and volition, Karma and jnana cannot be dispensed with at any stage. It is stated in 14:26.

> He who with unwavering practice of devotion does me service h crossed beyond these strands and is fit for Brahman's being.

The foundation of Bhakti is to be found in Sraddha which has been translated by Hill as 'faith'. In 6:47 Krishna tells Arjuna.

'Of all ascetics to him who with faith devoutly worships me, whose inmost self is lost in me, I hold him to be the most controlled.'

The end of Bhakti, is to be lost in wonder and love of Krishna. In the Gita Krishna reveals himself to Arjuna at the proper stage of his bhakti. (Chapter III). Indeed Krishna cannot be seen except by true devotion.

'Neither by the Vedas, nor by austerity nor by alms, nor yet by sacrifice can I be seen in such a form as thou hast seen, but by devotion undivided, Arjuna, in such a form can I be known and truly seen.' (11:53, 54).

In other words Bhakti destroys all delusions and leads to release as the following words clearly show:

'For this my divine delusion of the strands is hard to pass; Those who take refuge in me alone pass beyond this delusion' (7:14).

The way of bhakti is easy, and it is open to everyone.

'Quickly he becomes righteous, and goes to everlasting peace; be very sure, O Son of Kunti my votary does not perish. For even those, O Son of Pritha, who are born of the womb of sin. Women, Vaisyas and Sudras too, if they resort to me go on the highest way.'

The best summary of the threefold yoga of action, knowledge and devotion is the following passage:

'Through devotion does he recognize me in verity, what and who I am; then, knowing me in verity, at once he enters into me.

Though he do every work at every time, yet, if he rely on me, he by my grace wins to the realm eternal and immutable.

Cast off, in thought, all works on me; make me thy goal; turn to the practice of discernment; fix thy thought ever on me.

Fixing thy thought on me, thou shalt by my grace surmount all difficulties; if through thought of I thou hearken not, thou shalt perish.

If thou turnest to thought of I and thinkest, 'I will not fight,' vain is this thy resolve; Nature will constrain thee.

O son of Kunti, bound by thine own duty born of thine own nature, that thing which thou desirest not to do by reason of delusion thou shalt do, even against thy will.

The Lord, O Arjuna, dwells, in the heart of every being, and by his delusive power spins round all beings set on the machine.

In him alone seek refuge with all thy being, Bharata; by his grace shalt thou win to peace supreme, the eternal resting place.'

Note: All the quotations of Gita in this article are taken from *The Bhagavad Gita* Translated into English and annotated by D. P. Hill (Oxford University Press, 1953).

SWAMI ATMANAND: *Sankara's Teachings in His Own Words* (Bombay, Bharatiya Bhavan, 1958) pp. 228.

This book is primarily meant for the beginner. The author uses a simple language and has taken great pains to explain lucidly sanskrit technical terms. There are four separate prefaces. One by each of the following: the General Editor, the author, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, and by Acharya Vinoba Bhave.

The author subscribes to the Neo-Hindu view that all religions are equally good. So, he thinks an exposition of Sankara's views, 'Will profit the followers of all religions' (p. 28). It is stated that the aim of this book is 'to introduce the reader to the fundamental aspects of Sankara's teachings in their easiest form so as to make him comprehend Hinduism in its purest and simplest form'.

In this book Sankara's doctrines are presented in the form of Sutras (short, pithy propositions). The author thinks this is like studying the map of a new city before one goes out to see it actually. The subject is treated under four headings: *Pramanas* (Criteria of truth) *Karma* (mainly rituals), *Upasana* (meditation with a view to get prosperity), and *Jnana Nishta* (Meditation to realise God). There is a very good chapter on the life and achievements of Sankara. The book gives only the minimum of facts that will enable one to understand merely a brief sketch of Sankara's teachings. For instance in the chapter on Pramanas, the author deals only with Sabda, because in the final analysis it is solely on this authority that Sankara bases the structure of his whole philosophy. But most of the text books that deal with the subject elaborate on the six pramanas in general, and also tell how and why Sankara accepts three pramanas which Nyaya or yoga or samkhya rejects. On the other hand the author is not tired of repeating some of the central tenets of the adwaita philosophy. For instance the uselessness of rituals of the pravrtti type is repeated so often, that one who reads the book can never forget it.

The author's Comparison of his work to a sketch map of a new city is not only an apt description but also a reasonable criticism. There is no intrinsic use in the map of a city. The city must be seen by the person himself, directly, and enjoyed. Similarly is Sankara too. The wealth of his illustrations, the clear insight which he has of his opponents' view points, the poignancy of his arguments, the breadth of his Bhakti, the depth of his mysticism are all lost, when he is studied like the propositions of Euclid in the form of Sutras. On the other hand, the plan map of a town enables a foreigner to know where he stands and helps him to retrace his steps when he wants to withdraw.

The author is a born hero-worshipper. Two persons seem to claim his highest allegiance besides Sankara, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, and Vivekananda. So whenever possible he refers to them.

The publishers should be congratulated for bringing out a book of this type at so a reasonable price. The print is clear. But there are some errors of printing especially in the Preface part of the book. The word Bhakti is spelt in the preface Bhakthi (southern-orthography), similarly Tantra as Thantra. A uniform spelling would be a great improvement, not only for this book, but for the Bhawan's Book University Series.

R. D. Immanuel

The Cultural Heritage of India: Vol. I. (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1958) pp. 652, price Rs 35.

The third and fourth volumes of this series that appeared earlier have given the public a great expectation. They will not be disappointed, for to book lovers this is a real boon. This volume deals with the pre-historic glimmerings of Indian culture as found in the Indus valley civilization, the Aryan conquest and culture in Vedic times and lastly the Jaina and Buddhistic movements. These volumes are encyclopaedic in their scope and special care has been taken to pick out pre-eminently qualified persons to write the various articles. However, it is a Ramakrishna Mission Publication. So, history is not given as a conglomoration of loosely held facts and events as discovered by the research student rather they are marshalled to give an interpretation which is that 'the different systems described in these volumes, possess a unity of character and attitude which makes the manifold a single whole, which we might describe as the *Hindu Spirit*.' The advantage of such an interpretative presentation is, that it makes the picture clear bold, and bright. However, those who do not subscribe to the views of Ramakrishna Mission, might prefer other interpretations. Of course, no one can deny, that in the Pilgrim's Progress of Humanity, in the Great Spiritual quest which mankind has undertaken, India has in her own way made a great contribution.

This volume has four parts. Part one deals with the Background of Indian culture. In order to enable the reader understand better, articles dealing with the geographical, racial and linguistic factors affecting Indian culture have been clearly brought out. With reference to races it is stated that 'the present work is concerned more with the mind and the spirit, than with the body and the physical environment of the people of India'. The second part deals with 'Pre-historic India'. In some respects this is the most interesting part of the volume. It brings with in a small compass, a vast and rich mine of information, and that by authoritative writers. For instance the article on 'Indus Valley Civilization' is written by Sri Madho Sarup Vats formerly Director-General of Archaeology in India. The third part is entitled 'Vedic Civilization'. 'In the scheme of the multi-storeyed temple of learning, exhibiting numerous facets of the different-aspects of the cultural heritage of India on its different storeys, the present volume, dealing

with the 'Early Phases' of Indian Culture, serves as the foundation on which the magnificient superstructure is reared up. And in it, the Vedic civilization occupies a respectable position' (p. XLV). The last part deals with Jainism and Buddhism, and these two religions are treated as the flesh of flesh and bone of bone of Hinduism.

The Volume is a gigantic undertaking and its publication a remarkable success. We do hope that the other volumes will appear shortly.

R. D. IMMANUEL

SOME THEORIES OF ERROR IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Theories of truth and error loom large in Indian philosophy. The proverb 'tell me your friend and I shall tell you your character' can be parodied with a large amount of truth in Indian philosophy by saying 'tell me what is your idea of error and I shall tell you whose disciple you are.' Since theories of truth and error are vitally and organically connected with their conception of man's final release from misery and evil these topics assumed great importance. They might look academic to us, but to them over a thousand years ago they were real and living issues of not of philosophy but of life itself.

I. Asat Khyati

Let us start with our friends the Madhyamikas. These were the people of the middle path, in Buddhism and they were often called 'shunyavadins'. To these people error is 'taking the unreal to be real' when a man sees a dew drop on a leaf one moonlit night and takes it to be a grain of pearl he is in error. His error is taking the non-existent pearl as real. Were the pearl real there would have been no error at all. It is only because of its non-existence, that the statement becomes erroneous. The basic assumption here is, while valid cognitions have a substrate, these errors have no substrate behind them. The appearance of a man of bright wooly hair, when the eyes are closed and pressed lightly with finger tips, is quoted as an example of perception for which there is no substrate. The opponents of Madhyamika raise their voice of protest saying that it is impossible to cognize a non-existent thing. 'If it does not exist, how then does it come to be cognized?' they ask. The instance of a bright wooly ball is not relevant they say, because it has a substrate, namely rays of light. As T. M. P. Mahadevan points out 'The Satkhyativadins who are dissatisfied with the view of error as the cognition of the unreal as of the nature of the real base their theories on the positive import of delusive cognition, of the unreal there can be no cognition. In Delusion, however, there is cognition of the content[1].'

[1] T. M. P. Mahadevan: *The Philosophy of Advaita*, p. 85.

II. Atma Khyati

The sect of Buddhists called Vijnanavadins hold this view. Their theory of error is more metaphysical than logical. They do not admit extra-mental realities. However, they are not subjectivists like Hume, because for all practical purposes objects are real. For them error consists in regarding what is mental as real. However, since they hold that there is no extra-mental reality, it is very difficult for them to prove the difference between truth and error. So they prescribe two tests. The first one is test of sublation by experience. If it is sublated by another experience it is erroneous. The second test is the pragmatic test. If any judgment is devoid of practical utility it is probably erroneous. But the point of interest to us is that the sublation is different from what the ordinary man thinks. For example in the previous instance quoted, 'This is a grain of pearl' that which should be sublated is not pearl—but only 'Thisness'. According to the psychology of Vijnanavadin, there is no real difference between the self, the object of knowledge and knowledge[1]. The logical conclusion of this according to Nyaya opponents, is that this man should not say 'This is a grain of pearl' but 'I am a grain of pearl'. However much Dr Chandrabhan Sharma say that the Vijnanavadins are not subjectivists[2] their theory of error cannot account satisfactorily for the difference between truth and error.

III. Akhyati

According to this view error is non-apprehension. The great Mimamsa teacher Prabhakar, held this view. His contention was, all knowledge was valid. In error there are two propositions and each one of them is valid if taken separately. In the example that we have taken 'I see a grain of pearl' Prabhakar would say the propositions are 'I see this', and 'a grain of pearl is an object'. Both of these if taken separately would be true. But here error is due to the fact that these which should be discriminated as separate cognitions, are mistakenly apprehended as one object. Two unrelated objects are here and in this case perceived as one probably on account of a defect in the eye. Anyhow the error is one of omission and not of commission. Since all knowledge is quite valid, we can call this incomplete knowledge, or imperfect knowledge. It is incomplete in this case because the dew drop's liquid nature was not perceived. Only the common characteristics it has with a grain of pearl was noted. Prabhakar would insist that the dew drop is perceived the moment the man tries to take it, that is at that moment his previous incomplete knowledge is supplemented and his error is removed. That is error is correct knowledge as far as it goes,but it is error because there is some omission in it.

[1] S. Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 2. p. 131.
[2] „ : *Indian Philosophy*, pp. 161—162.

IV. Viparita Khyati

Kumarila subscribes to this view. According to this view there is some commission in the part of the mind in error; that is Kumarila will not say that error is only pure omission. Rather, it is a partial misrepresentation. He agrees with Prabhakar in saying that there are two things present one 'This' and two 'a grain of pearl'. But he differs from Prabhakar by saying that there is only one cognition. By this erroneous cognition, the object presented to the senses namely 'this' is identified with 'the grain of pearl' which is only in the memory of the perceiver. While in this particular case one element of the cognition is an object and the other memory, error can arise on account of the non-discrimination of two objects or two items of memory.

V. Anyatha Khyati

Very closely connected with Viparita Khyati is the theory of error advocated by the Nyaya philosopher, called anyatha khyati. Here error is illegitimate transference. That is, when a dew drop is mistaken for a grain of pearl, the pearl is in the shop (apasastha). The human mind has a peculiar power to perceive (jnanalakshana pratyaksha) such objects and then combine them with the datum presented to the senses now. So, error is a sort of manufactured product in which the mind has an active part to play. There is a confusion herein, in which the presented object is synthesised with the represented percept. While this seems to be like the theory of Kumarila, the differences are significant. First of all, the Nyaya philosopher consistent with his ideas of realism is not willing to say that datum presented is combined with a mental product. So he says the dew drop is combined with the grain of pearl in the shop! The second difference is even more important. The Nyaya man does not say like the Mimasaka that knowledge is intrinsically valid. To him the nature of truth lies in correspondence. But since no one can jump out of his mind and compare what is with in the mind with what is outside the mind, the Nyaya man offers the pragmatic test as the sole test of truth.

VI. Yathartha Khyati

The famous philosopher Ramanuja propounds this theory. According to this there can be no error at all. It is the logical conclusion developed fearlessly from the maxim of Prabhakar that all knowledge is intrinsically valid. Mind is there to know. Why should one doubt the mind? Knowledge is based on the axiom that knowledge is correct or valid.

So, Ramanuja resorts to mental gymnastics to prove that even illusions have reality. For instance in the case of mirage, that there are actually a few particles of water in the desert place and that when the mirage is seen, these few particles, even through they are of an insignificantly small proportion, the perceiver happens to see only the water particles. That which interests us is not his explanation, but the motive underlying his explanation which is that all knowledge is essentially valid and that there is no error at all.

However, he makes two qualifications. One is man has not got the whole truth, nor is there any man who is not acquainted with any truth. In other words every man has some truth, but no man has all truth, so, for one man to say that another man has not got truth will be like, to use a modern phrase, a pot calling the kettle black. The second qualification is that the nature of truth has nothing to do with its usefulness. What people call erroneous knowledge, is only knowledge peculiar to one person or knowledge that cannot be put to work. Really valid knowledge is attained only by God. All other knowledge is only partial and to that extent erroneous. We say that mirage-water is an illusion because it does not quench our thirst.

VII. Anirvacaniya Khyati

The advaita school holds on to this view, and as expounded by Sankara, it has become classical. Sankara established his theory first by criticising and disproving all other theories. He sees an amount of truth in every important philosopher that preceded him (Ramanuja is later than Sankara). That is, those who say that the grain of pearl (in the instance taken by us) is real and those who say that it is not real are contradicting each other; the reasons of their disapproval of the other's position seem to be valid to Sankara and he comes to the strange conclusion that error or ignorance is neither real or nor unreal! If one asks him 'why is not this grain of pearl real?' he would say, 'then why is it erroneous and why does it not stand sublation?' And on the other hand if some one asks why is it not unreal, he would retort 'otherwise how could any one cognize it?' If error is neither real nor unreal, one might ask them what could it be. Sankara's answer for that is 'it is anirvacaniya or undeterminable'. That is according to the Advaitins, error is not imperfect or incomplete knowledge. It is positively wrong knowledge. No amount of additional facts will correct wrong knowledge. The only way to get correct knowledge is to get rid of errors. One must demolish completely the wrong ideas and then begin to construct valid knowledge. It is not by supplementing error that one arrives at truth, but only by supplanting error by truth can man reach validity. The root cause of all this is ignorance or nescience, which has cosmic potency. First of all the real is veiled, or covered. In the case we have taken, the dew drop is so covered from knowledge, that it can never be perceived. Secondly, the unreal grain of pearl is superimposed. It is this superimposition of the unreal upon the real that gives the strength to error, for so long as it persists, it will be impossible to see the dew drop. The ground of error the datum presented to the senses is real. But the interpretation is the creation of nescience or ignorance. In the final end error is inexplicable. Its process of generation can be described analytically, but its explanation will prove futile. Its appearance of reality gives it strength and endurance. However, though error is inexplicable it is resolvable. True knowledge destroys all errors.

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